

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----037719 240901Z /12

O 240805Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8409
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3504

EXDIS TREAT AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PEPR LE IS
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS

1. SUMMARY: FONMIN BOUTROS FEELS HE STILL HAS NO ANSWER TO HIS MAIN QUESTION WHICH IS, WILL ISRAELIS RESTRAIN CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN THE SOUTH? SECOND QUESTION IS, WILL THEY FAVOR ENTRY OF LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF) INTO SOUTH WITH UNDERSTANDING LAF WILL HAVE TO TAKE EFFECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST MILITIAS AS WELL AS PALESTINIANS? ASKS WHAT ISRAELI CONCERNS ARE AND SUGGESTS THAT LEBANESE MAY BE ABLE ANSWER THEM, ON THEIR OWN TERMS, HOWEVER. SAYS ISRAELIS SHOULD GAUGE GOL POSITION BY WHAT GOVERNMENT DECIDES, NOT WHAT ITS LEADERS MAY SAY.

2. WE ARE IN POSITION TO ENTER ANOTHER INDIRECT EXCHANGE BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND LEBANESE OF SORT WE CARRIED ON LAST FALL, IF ISRAELIS ARE INTERESTED.

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AM NOT SURE GAME IS WORTH THE CANDLE, BUT BELIEVE WE SHOULD PLAY IT ANYWAY. END SUMMARY.

3. HAD LONG CONVERSATION ON SOUTH LEBANON WITH FONMIN BOUTROS MORNING JUNE 23. STARTED OFF BY HIS TELLING ME NEW UNIFIL POLITICAL ADVISOR AIME HAD BEEN TO SEE HIM EARLIER IN DAY AND HAD REPORTED THAT THINGS

WERE MOVING, IF SLOWLY. HE HAD RECEIVED SIMILAR ASSESSMENT FROM FRENCH AMBASSADOR. AIME HAD SAID HADDAD AND HIS FOLLOWERS WANTED TO TALK TO UNIFIL COMMANDERS. BOUTROS HAD REPLIED THAT HADDAD HAD NO AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. HE COULD NOT COMMIT GOL. IF UNIFIL HAD TO HAVE WORKING CONTACTS WITH HADDAD, BOUTROS DID NOT WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT OR BE IN POSITION OF APPROVING THEM.

4. BOUTROS COMMENTED THAT HE WOULD REALLY LIKE TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON IN SOUTH AND WE DISCUSSED CONFLICTING REPORTS ON CASUALTIES IN PREVIOUS DAY'S FIGHT BETWEEN NORWEGIANS AND PFLP NEAR RASHAYA AL-FUKHAR. BOUTROS CONCLUDED THAT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS TWO NORWEGIANS HAD BEEN KILLED COULD NOT BE TRUE.

5. BOUTROS THEN SAID LEBANESE PERMREP TUENI HAD IMPRESSION USG MIGHT BE IN BETTER POSITION TO PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAELIS REGARDING SOUTH IN LIGHT OF UNSATISFACTORY ISRAELI RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONS ABOUT FUTURE OF WEST BANK. (LOGIC NOT CLEAR TO ME. PERHAPS TUENI MEANT WE WOULD BE MORE DISPOSED TO EXERT PRESSURE.) I POINTED OUT THAT WE HAD ALREADY MADE VERY STRONG DEMARCHES TO ISRAELIS AND I THOUGHT THESE WERE HAVING EFFECT. I THEN GAVE HIM SANITIZED VERSION OF HELPFUL STATEMENT IN TEL AVIV'S 7901 AND BRIEFED
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HIM ON REMARKS GAZIT MADE TO POLOFF AND DATT (TEL AVIV 7679), NOTING THAT GAZIT HAD AFFIRMED THAT GOI CONTINUES TO FAVOR DEPLOYMENT OF LAF TO SOUTH BUT IS DUBIOUS ABOUT SERIOUSNESS OF GOL INTENT. I SUGGESTED THAT LEBANESE SHOULD TRY TO WORK OUT ARRANGEMENTS WITH THEM THROUGH ILMAC.

6. BOUTROS SAID ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARDS ILMAC WAS EQUIVOCAL. ISRAELIS DID NOT WANT TO RECOGNIZE ITS LEGITIMACY. THEY WERE MEETING WITH LEBANESE, BUT WITHOUT ACCEPTING LEGALITY OF ILMAC. I SAID IT APPEARED TO ME THERE WERE DIVERGENCES WITHIN GOI ON SUBJECT. IF, HOWEVER, ILMAC WERE RECONSTITUTED IN FORMER FRAMEWORK, WOULD LEBANESE BE PREPARED SEND SENIOR OFFICER TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAELIS? BOUTROS SAID THEY WERE ALREADY SENDING A COLONEL, WHAT DID ISRAELIS WANT, THE CHIEF OF STAFF? I ASKED IF PERHAPS THE G-2, JOHNNY ABDO COULD NOT GO FOR STARTERS. HE SAID ABDO HAD GONE TO ONE MEETING AND THEN WITHDRAWN WHEN HE SAW THAT IT WAS GOING TO BE AN EMPTY EXERCISE.

7. BOUTROS THEN FOCUSED ON TEL AVIV'S ASSESSMENT AND

SAID IT DID NOT ANSWER HIS REAL QUESTION WHICH WAS, WOULD ISRAELIS RESTRAIN THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS? THE LATTER WERE NOW THE ONLY REMAINING OBSTACLE TO THE ENTRY OF LEBANESE TROOPS IN THE SOUTH. IT WAS NOT TRUE, AS GAZIT CLAIMED, THAT GOL WAS UNABLE TO SEND TROOPS TO THE SOUTH BECAUSE OF THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH. THE OBSTACLES HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE NORTH, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. THEY WERE THE ATTITUDES ON THE GROUND, THE ATTITUDES OF THE MILITIAS SUPPLIED AND BACKED BY ISRAEL.

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03504 02 OF 02 240914Z
ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8410
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
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8. FURTHERMORE, GAZIT'S COMMENTS ON THE INADVISABILITY OF SENDING MOSLEM TROOPS INTO CHRISTIAN VILLAGES DID NOT SHOW MUCH UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION THE GOL FOUND ITSELF IN. WHAT GAZIT WAS SAYING (AND I LATER LEARNED, CHAMOUN HAD SAID TO BRITISH AMBASSADOR EARLIER THE SAME DAY) WAS TANTAMOUNT TO DEMANDING PARTITION. THE GOL WAS COMMITTED TO AN INTEGRATED ARMY AND COULD NOT PUT ITSELF IN POSITION OF NOT USING MOSLEMS IN CHRISTIAN AREAS AND VICE VERSA.

9. BOUTROS THEN SAID GOL WOULD ARRANGE, EITHER THROUGH ILMAC OR US, TO LET ISRAELIS KNOW THEIR VIEWS AND INTENTIONS ON TROOPS DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTH. THEY COULD NOT ADMIT, HOWEVER, THAT ISRAELIS SHOULD HAVE VOICE DECIDING WHO WOULD GO WHERE. THEY RECONGNIZED

NEED FOR COORDINATION AND IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW WHAT ISRAEL'S CONCERNS WERE SO THAT THEY COULD TRY TO MEET THEM. LEBANESE WOULD HAVE TO DO THIS IN THEIR OWN WAY, HOWEVER, NOT THE ISRAELIS'. IF, ON OTHER HAND,
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ISRAELIS WERE STARTING FROM PROPOSITION THAT PROBLEM WOULD NEVER BE SETTLED, WHICH WAS IMPLIED BY GAZIT'S REMARKS, THEN THEY WERE ALL WASTING THEIR BREATH. I SAID I THOUGHT GAZIT HAD PROBABLY BEEN INDULGING IN HYPERBOLE AND IN ANY EVENT WAS NOT MAKING AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF GOI POSITION. ENCOURAGING PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN PAST SIX WEEKS AND I BELIEVED ISRAELIS WERE INTERESTED IN SETTLING PROBLEM AND RESTORING STABILITY TO SOUTH LEBANON.

10. BOUTROS SAID IN THAT CASE HE NEEDED CLEAR VIEWS ON SEVERAL POINTS: (A) WILL ISRAELIS RESTRAIN MILITIAS? (B) DO THEY FAVOR ENTRY OF LEBANESE TROOPS WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION AGAINST MILITIAS AS WELL AS PALESTINIANS? UNIFIL HAD UNFORTUNATELY CHOSEN PATH OF ACCOMMODATION WITH MILITIAS AS WELL AS PALESTINIANS. THEY WERE NOW LOCKED INTO THAT POSTURE AND COULD NOT GET OUT OF IT. LEBANESE DID NOT WANT TO MAKE SAME MISTAKE. IF THEY WERE TO ASSUME CONTROL OF AREA, THEY HAD TO BE ABLE TO TAKE FIRM STEPS AGAINST ALL ARMED ELEMENTS NOT UNDER THEIR CENTRAL AUTHORITY. (C) WHAT ARE ISRAELI CONCERNS ABOUT ENTRY OF LEBANESE TROOPS? WHAT REASSURANCES DO THEY NEED?

11. FINALLY, HE SAID ISRAELIS WERE MISTAKEN WHEN THEY SAID SARKIS AND BOUTROS SAID ONE THING AND HOSS SAID ANOTHER AND CONCLUDED THAT MEANT THEY WOULD DO NOTHING. WHAT COUNTED WAS NOT WHAT THE MEN CONCERNED MIGHT FEEL PRIVATELY. WHAT COUNTED WAS THE DECISION THEY TOOK, WHICH REQUIRED THAT THEY FIND COMMON GROUND.

12. I SAID HIS QUESTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE POSED TO ISRAELIS IF HE WANTED AUTHORITATIVE ANSWERS. BOUTROS
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ASKED THAT WE NOT POSE THEM AS COMING DIRECTLY FROM HIM TO ISRAELIS, BUT RATHER THAT WE PASS THEM TO ISRAELIS AS OUR ASSESSMENT OF GOL POSITION AND ASK FOR THEIR COMMENTS.

13. COMMENT: WE ARE NOW IN A POSITION APPROACHING THAT OF LAST FALL, WHEN WE WERE PASSING MESSAGES BACK AND FORTH WITH REGARD TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER ISRAELIS ARE INTERESTED IN RESUMING SUCH AN INDIRECT DIALOGUE AGAIN, AND AM NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC IT WILL LEAD ANYWHERE, BECAUSE I RATHER SHARE GAZIT'S VIEWS ON LEBANESE CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK WE SHOULD MAKE ANOTHER COLLEGE TRY AND SEE WHETHER IT LEADS ANYWHERE ON THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE THAT EVEN AN INDIRECT DIALOGUE BETWEEN ARAB AND ISRAELI IS A STEP FORWARD. I UNDERSTAND FULLY ISRAELI DESIRES TO HAVE ANY SUCH DISCUSSIONS DIRECTLY, BUT FACT IS THESE QUESTIONS ARE SO DELICATE THAT NO SUBORDINATE LEBANESE IS GOING TO HAVE AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS THEM DIRECTLY, AND NO SENIOR PERSON IS WILLING TO GET HIMSELF ENGAGED IN SUCH TALKS DIRECTLY WITH ISRAELIS. FOR TIME BEING, INDIRECT PATH IS ONLY ONE OPEN. I THEREFORE SUGGEST THAT AS A START TEL AVIV TRY BOUTROS' THREE QUESTIONS IN PARA 10 ABOVE ON APPROPRIATE ISRAELI, NOTING THAT BOUTROS HAS ASKED THEM OF ME. (I DON'T IMAGINE ISRAELIS WILL TAKE QUESTIONS VERY SERIOUSLY IF THEY ARE PRESENTED AS OUR "ASSESSMENT" OF GOL POSITION.)
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, MEETINGS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT03504
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P850083-2445
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780623/aaaaauchb.tel
Line Count: 248
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 053d1782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2220081
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOUTH LEBANON: DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, LE, IS, US, (BOUTROS)
To: STATE AMMAN MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/053d1782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014